**Trail Warriors is a collaboration between WSU Horse 4-H and BCHW. Young riders are enrolled in 4-H and are covered by 4-H insurance. Parents who are pre-members of BCHW are also covered by 4-H insurance. Of course, our hope is that many parents will join BCHW and that the young riders will also join when they turn 18.**

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The very successful **Trail Warriors BCHW/4-H Trail Riding Project** was formed in October 2022 with 11 youth members. Carole Schuh, a member of both Purple Sage Riders and Rattlesnake Ridge Riders Chapters, is the 4-H Project Leader. She was invited in August to the Benton-Franklin Horse Fair to promote the BCHW Youth Program. The young 4-Hers were invited to “get out of the arena and out on the trail”. Eleven parents signed their children up. In 2022 Trail Warriors joined Purple Sage Riders BCHW Chapter as a “youth group”. The unexpected fun piece of this new project is that the moms, dads and grandparents want to trail ride also. It is a family experience.

**Trail Etiquette and Safety**: It is the task of the seven qualified BCHW Trail Warrior leaders to teach these “arena riders” how to safely ride the trail with others while practicing their trail etiquette skills. This element of learning also teaches “What’s in Your Saddlebag?” and Trail Preparedness.

**Trail Horse Obstacle Skills**: This “Horse Course” helps prepare the youth and their horses for the trail. It includes stepping over logs, crossing over bridges, walking through water, meeting bicycles and/or hikers with backpacks, and passing other horses on the trail.

**Leave No Trace**: One of the qualified Trail Warrior leaders is an LNT trainer who teaches the Seven Principles of LNT to the Trail Warriors. They are learning to take care of their natural world and leave their environment better than they found it. They recently spent an afternoon picking up many garbage bags of trash on our favorite local trail along the Yakima River as well as in the local horse campground where the trail head is.

**On the Trail:** Each young rider is accompanied by a parent or grandparent. They ride in their family groups with a Trail Warrior leader teaching and training as they enjoy the trail ride. Goals for local trail rides are three rides in the spring and three rides in the fall with a local campout in the spring. These rides take place in riding parks and rangelands around the Tri Cities, Washington and are 5-7 miles long. We completed nine trail rides in 2024 for a total of 1041 accumulated miles since we started this project. Our long-term goal is to join a BCHW work party and camp in the mountains.

**Local Campouts:**  We’ve had two successful local spring campouts at Horn Rapids Horse Camp north of Benton City. Last April there were 18 people (six Trail Warriors, seven family members and five leaders) who stayed in tents, campers and horse trailers. They learned how to safely contain their horses overnight. Some purchased hotwire pens, some brought panels and others brought the proper equipment to use the permanent horse camp highline poles. Each camper practiced LNT and left an extremely clean campground.

**Year End Awards:**  At the end of each year a Celebration Dinner is held at a local riding clubhouse. Thirty-eight youth, parents, grandparents and leaders enjoyed the latest celebration together. Each Trail Warrior receives a t-shirt, a “Certificate of Completion” and a saddle tag to commemorate the completion of the year. In 2024 Trail Warriors received a $500 grant from BCHA which helped to pay for our Celebration Dinner, t-shirts and commemorative saddle tags. We also received money to purchase new solar-charged pens and some highline equipment.

**~ We must teach our youth to love and value time on the trail if we plan on them being the next generation of Back Country Horsemen. ~**